

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 OMB-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 /073 W
-----251428Z 101530 /44

R 251205Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3450
INFO AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
USCINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 1338

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, US, SA
SUBJECT: SITUATION IN LEBANON: VIEWS OF SAUDI AMBASSADOR

1. SUMMARY: SAUDI AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES AID TO LEBANON, ARAB SECURITY FORCES MANDATE, QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION AND LEBANESE ARMY. RELATIVELY UPBEAT ON ALL THESE QUESTION. SAYS LEBANESE PLEASED WITH RESULTS OF RIYADH MEETING ON ARAB AID, THAT SYRIANS ANXIOUS TO LEAVE LEBANON AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, THAT QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION NOW APPROACHING ATTAINMENT ITS FINAL GOAL, AND THAT HE BELIEVES LEBANESE CAN HAVE ARMY CAPABLE OF ASSURING ORDER BY END OF YEAR. HE IS PROBABLY OVER-OPTIMISTIC IN THIS LATTER REGARD. END SUMMARY.

2. DURING MY MARCH 24 COURTESY CALL ON SAUDI AMBASSADOR GEN. ALI AL-SHAER, HE MADE FOLLOWING COMMENTS OF INTEREST:
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3. RIYADH MEETING - MARCH 21-22 MEETING AT RIYADH HAD DISCUSSED AMOUNTS AND MODALITIES OF ARAB AID TO LEBANON. LEBANESE HAD BEEN HAPPY WITH RESULTS. HE MENTIONED NO AMOUNTS BUT SAID THERE WOULD BE BOTH GRANT AID AND LOANS AT NOMINAL INTEREST. PLAN WAS TO SET UP SPECIAL FUND WHICH WOULD BE

ADMINISTERED BY IBRD (NOT CLEAR FROM HIS REMARKS
WHETHER THIS DECIDED OR MERELY PROPOSED).

4. ARAB SECURITY FORCES MANDATE - ARAB LEAGUE
WOULD SHORTLY BE MEETING TO EXTEND MANDATE OF
ARAB SECURITY FORCES FOR ANOTHER SIX MONTHS (PRESENT
MANDATE EXPIRES APRIL 30). THERE WAS A STRONG
TENDENCY TO TACK WORD "ONLY" ON TO "SIX MONTHS,"
BUT SOME LESS CATEGORIC FORMULA WOULD PROBABLY
BE FOUND. THERE WAS LITTLE ENTHUSIASM FOR PROLONGING
IT BEYOND THAT DATE, HOWEVER. SYRIANS HAD NO DESIRE
STAY LONGER THAN NECESSARY. PRESIDENT ASAD HAD
CATEGORICALLY ASSURED ARAB LEADERS AT CAIRO, IN
RESPONSE TO ARAFAT REQUEST FOR FORCE LESS HEAVILY
SYRIAN, THAT SYRIA HAD ABSOLUTELY NO DESIGNS ON
LEBANON AND WANTED TO GET ITS TROOPS OUT AS SOON
AS POSSIBLE. IF OTHER ARAB STATES WERE PREPARED
TO PROVIDE NECESSARY TROOPS, SYRIANS WOULD WITHDRAW
IMMEDIATELY.

5. QUADRIPARTITE COMMISSION - COMMISSION HAD
ORIGINALLY BEEN CREATED AT ARAFAT'S REQUEST TO
PROVIDE BUFFER BETWEEN HIMSELF AND PALESTINIANS ON
ONE HAND, AND SYRIANS ON OTHER. IT HAD SET FOR
ITSELF THREE GOALS: (1) COLLECTION OF ARMS, (2)
REMOVAL OF PALESTINE LIBERATION ARMY FORCES, AND (3)
IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS.

6. FIRST GOAL HAD BEEN ABOUT 60 PERCENT
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ACCOMPLISHED. PALESTINIANS HAD GIVEN UP OR
SMUGGLED OUT OF COUNTRY ABOUT 75 PERCENT OF THEIR
HEAVY WEAPONS. MARONITES HAD GIVEN UP LESS OF
THEIRS, BUT SHAER BELIEVED WEAPONS STORED IN CAVES
AND CHURCHES WOULD RUST AND BECOME UNUSEABLE
IN TIME. IMPORTANT CONSIDERATION WAS THAT THEY NOW
OUT OF CIRCULATION, AND HE HAD RECOMMENDED THAT
FORCEFUL ATTEMPT TO SEIZE THEM NOT BE MADE, JUST
AS HE HAD RECOMMENDED THAT SYRIANS NOT ATTEMPT
FORCEFULLY TO COLLECT WEAPONS FROM SABRA AND
SHATILA CAMPS.

7. SECOND GOAL, EVACUATION OF PLA FORCES, HAD
BEEN ACCOMPLISHED ALMOST ENTIRELY. A FEW CIVILIAN
ELEMENTS OF THOSE FORCES REMAINED BEHIND, BUT FORCES
THEMSELVES HAD LEFT.

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8. THIRD GOAL WAS IMPLEMENTATION OF CAIRO ACCORDS. ACCORDS SUBJECT TO VARYING INTERPRETATIONS, AND COMMISSION'S TASK HAD BEEN TO WORK OUT AGREED INTERPRETATION AND GET IT ACCEPTED BY ARAFAT AND HIS COLLEAGUES. THEY HAD REACHED AGREEMENT ON MOST ASPECTS, INCLUDING NUMBER AND LOCATION OF FORCES IN SOUTH, BUT ONE SENSITIVE POINT REMAINED TO BE RESOLVED: PROPORTION (NISBA) OF SECURITY FORCES TO BE STATIONED IN CAMPS. (I UNDERSTOOD HIM TO SAY PALESTINIANS WERE TRYING TO HOLD THEM DOWN TO THREE PER 1,000, WHEREAS COMMISSION FELT SEVEN PER 1,000 WAS MINIMUM. OTHER REPORTING INDICATES THAT I MAY HAVE THIS BACKWARD, BUT MAYBE EVERYONE ELSE IS WRONG.) HE WAS TO HAVE NEGOTIATING SESSION WITH SOME OF PLO HOUR AFTER OUR MEETING. HE CONFIDENT AGREEMENT WOULD BE REACHED SOONER OR LATER.

9. LEBANESE ARMY - SHAER THOUGHT IT WOULD TAKE
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LEBANESE ARMY THREE YEARS TO GET BACK TO ITS FORMER
CONDITION, BUT FORCE CAPABLE OF MAINTAINING ORDER

COULD BE IN OPERATION BY END OF YEAR, PROVIDED
SERIOUS EFFORT MADE. ALL OFFICERS WHO PARTICIPATED
IN FIGHTING ON WHATEVER SIDE WOULD HAVE TO BE RELIEVED
AND NEUTRAL OFFICERS BROUGHT IN TO FORM A COMMISSION
WHICH WOULD RECRUIT AND ORGANIZE A NEW ARMY.
ENLISTED MEN WHO PARTICIPATED IN FIGHTING COULD BE
USED, BECAUSE THEY NOT HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR DEATHS
CAUSED WHEN THEY UNDER ORDERS.

10. I SAID I UNDERSTOOD SARKIS WAS CONSIDERING REPLACING
GEN. HANNA SAID, PRESENT ARMY COMMANDER. SHAER SAID
PROBLEM WAS PICKING A SUCCESSOR. HE MADE NO MENTION
OF AGITATION EARLIER IN DAY AT ARMY HEADQUARTERS
ON THIS SUBJECT.

11. COMMENT: SHAER IS IMPRESSIVE FIGURE. IS VERY
KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT LEBANON, AND OBVIOUSLY BRIGHT.
HIS COMMENTS ON REORGANIZING ARMY, HOWEVER, ARE
GROSS OVERSIMPLIFICATION OF VERY COMPLEX PSYCHOLOGICAL
AND POLITICAL PROBLEM. RELIEVING OFFICERS WHO
FOUGHT ON ONE SIDE OR ANOTHER IS EXACTLY WHAT
MARONITES ARE OPPOSING. THEY WANT TO REATIN
THOSE OFFICERS WHO FOUGHT FOR "LEGALITY", I.E.
FOR MARONITES.
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